



METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH AT MOBILE

1600 Center Street, Mobile, Alabama 36604

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

Pastor

(205) 476-9142

NEWSLETTER

Valentine's Day

Love and Valentine's Day reminds me that same-sex love has been around for a long time. Walt Whitman wrote some beautiful poetry describing his feelings for another man. A favorite is this:

WHEN I HEARD AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had been received with plaudits
in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for me that follow'd,

And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were accomplish'd, still I was not
happy,

But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health, refresh'd,
singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disappear in the morning
light,

When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing bathed, laughing with the
cool waters, and saw the sun rise,

And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on his way coming, O then I
was happy,

O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food nourish'd me more,
and the beautiful day pass'd well,

And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at evening came my friend,
And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll slowly continually up
the shores,

I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed to me whispering
to congratulate me,

For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover in the cool
night,

In the stillness of the autumn moonbeams his face was inclined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast -- and that night I was happy.

FROM THE EDITOR--

If you have received this newsletter in a bar, or have received it through the mail but have not attended MCC * Mobile lately, I want to encourage you to join us! Like the ad elsewhere in this issue says, "Don't Be Shy!" We have in our midst people of all ages and from all walks of life. We have homemakers... we have businessmen... we have teachers... we have professors... we have carpenters... we have students... we have musicians... we have retailers... we have the unemployed, too, and we try to help them. We have men, women, boys, girls, people who drive 30, 50, even 100 miles every Sunday night to be with us. We have a unique program called the AIDS Buddy Program... volunteers within the church community give of their time and energy to assist AIDS patients in need. We have a weekly bible study, covering a wide range of topics. We have a weekly discussion group called "Rap," which provides everyone in the community an opportunity to meet in a non-threatening environment to do just that --- rap. We have our own facility for worship service and other church events. We have our own facility with which we assist AIDS patients and others in need. So, you might say that we have it all. ~~WRONG!~~ We don't have YOU. If you have always been curious about what an MCC is, or if your own church will not in principle accept you for what you are, or if you just haven't "felt religious" in a few weeks, months or even years, then give MCC * Mobile a try. MCC is people caring about people --- we do not condemn, we do not condone, we DO try to understand.

Obviously this piece is being directed at those who do not normally or regularly join us in our church activities. Some in the non-gay community would readily jump on this as "recruiting." Some would say that I am trying to make our attendance figures look more impressive. Some would probably say that I am just filling up empty space in the newsletter. No, none of these are true. One year ago, I had reached a very low point in my life, spiritually speaking. My own church had long ago told me, in so many words, that I was unfit to belong, did not adhere to beliefs, was in effect not a whole person simply because I happen to be Gay. Upon moving to Mobile, I learned of the MCC and eventually met its pastor, Rev. Marge Ragona. I had of course heard of MCC but had never lived in a city which had one. I began to attend services, became a member in February, and shortly thereafter I was approached to handle the monthly newsletter. Through MCC * Mobile I have met many, many people --- people I most likely would never have met in the bars, on the street, or anywhere else. My life has been thoroughly enriched by knowing and dealing with many of these people.

But the point of all this is that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, just like me, who are out there in that vague, shadowy, sometimes confusing expanse of land we call Mobile --- people who are in need of what MCC * Mobile has to offer --- people who need the support of others --- people who deep down inside know that they want to "belong" to something --- and even people who are just downright curious. On some of my very infrequent ventures into downtown, I occasionally hear from people who express at least a passing interest in what goes on at MCC * Mobile. But very often, these people never do quite make it when Sunday night rolls around. What happened?

Won't you join us... give us a try... see what we are all about. Who knows, you may be very pleasantly surprised!

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This is the official organ of the Metropolitan Community Church at Mobile, Alabama, 1600 Center Street, Mobile AL 36606. The newsletter is published monthly to inform church members and the community-at-large about events of MCC * Mobile. We welcome your contributions! All we require is that a name and address be submitted along with the news copy for publication. We will not print anyone's name or address, however, without explicit written consent. Please contribute your news, views, recent happenings, recipes, book and movie reviews, or place a free classified ad with us (no personals, please.) Send your submissions by the 20th of each month to: 1600 Center Street, Mobile, AL 36604

A COVENANT OF LOVE

Here it is February and Valentine's Day is just around the corner. Love is in the air and lovers are thinking about spring and relationships, and being in love is once more fashionable. So -- by the way -- is commitment. MCC honors commitment, and believes that people grow by making and keeping commitments. Someone once said that anyone can love 20 people in a year, the trick is to love one person for 20 years! If you have a committed relationship that has lasted over time, maybe you'd like to think about celebrating that relationship with a commitment or covenant ceremony. MCC performs a rite called a "Holy Union" which does just that -- celebrates commitment. We require first that the two people acknowledge that the relationship is intended to be a long-term commitment (and we even think of these as "life partnerships") and that they will be sharing their lives in a very personal covenant, which transcends any other relationship. Secondly, we ask that the relationship be in existence for at least a year, or that they have spent six months living together, and know that the relationship can withstand the everyday tensions of life under one roof. Third, we ask that you be willing to undergo some probing into how your relationship works, so that the person who performs the ceremony can do so with a sense of integrity, knowing that the relationship is indeed a solid one.

If this interests you, please call Rev. Marge at 476-9142 and talk about what a Holy Union might mean in your life and how it might make your relationship better for both of you. Celebrating life and love is a wonderful way to announce to your friends (and maybe even your family) that your love is here to stay.

FOR ALL TIME, LOVE

If I have all human or angelic eloquence, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, enough to move mountains, but am without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to be burned, but am without love, it will do me no good whatsoever.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous. Love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish. Love does not take offense, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth. It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

Love does not come to an end. But if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or if one has the gift of tongues, it will not continue forever. If one has all knowledge, this too must fail. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will disappear. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, thought like a child, argued like a child; but now I am grown, and all childish ways are put behind me. Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now the knowledge that I have is imperfect, but then I shall know as fully as I am known.

In short, there are three things that abide: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.

I Corinthians 13

And in the Bible, one woman said to another:

Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to keep from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so and more beside, if ought save death part me and thee.

Ruth 1:14-17

A Gay Witness to Pope John Paul II

TO ITS SURPRISE, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches received an invitation to participate in the ecumenical prayer service led by Pope John Paul II at Williams-Brice Stadium in Columbia, South Carolina, during his recent visit to the U.S. The invitation, issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, offered us the chance to participate in the clergy procession as well as the subsequent "Day of Dialogue" with Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, president of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity, Bishop James Crumley of the Lutheran Church in America, and other ecumenical leaders.

The surprise is due to the fact that our denomination has a special ministry to gays and lesbians. We are well aware of the Vatican's negative stance on homosexuality, and that Dignity International (the organization for gay and lesbian Catholics) was not invited to any papal events. It seemed strange to us that our first contact ever with the bishops would be this invitation. Indeed, the invitation may have been a mistake—though one organizer of the prayer service at Columbia told us it was not. In any case, our presence was never mentioned publicly, or acknowledged in any of the literature concerning the event. Perhaps MCC fell into the category of "the other groups" cited in the program.

Many of our gay sisters and brothers, so hurt and angered by the Roman Catholic Church, would probably not understand why we accepted the invitation. But we felt it was important to make a witness.

The "Day of Dialogue" offered us little chance for dialogue, however. Presentations by Willebrands and Crumley left time for only three questions from the audience. (Since many of the invited guests represented denominations that had been engaged in bilateral discussions with the Roman Catholic Church, it occurred to us that we were included in the group because of MCC's formal discussion with the National Council of Churches.) I did get the chance to introduce myself informally to Cardinal Willebrands, though it was unclear whether he grasped the nature of our denomination. There was no time to continue the conversation.

Before the prayer service we crowded into a waiting room for about four hours with other Catholics and Protestants, national leaders and local pastors. During that time we renewed old acquaintances and made new friends—and experienced the full range of responses to our lapel buttons that stated "God is Greater than AIDS."

Tony D. Perry, the founder of the MCC, and I carried with us in that clergy procession the hopes and fears, rage and pain of millions of gay and lesbian Catholics—those who are now members of MCC; those who are not in any church; and those who are trying to remain faithful Roman Catholics. We also represented those who are living and dying with AIDS, knowing that it is largely homophobic hysteria that has tragically impeded adequate research, treatment, education, justice and compassion. And we carried with us the blessed assurance that perseverance, time and the Holy Spirit are on our side. As people come to know us, homophobic fear is healed.

There were some special ironies in the service of the word at Columbia. The first reading, delivered by Helen Hayes, was from Ruth 1:14-17. For us in MCC, and for gays and lesbians everywhere, that Scripture is a poignant story of the deep commitment of one woman to another. We have always smiled inwardly when the church uses it so glibly and uncritically for heterosexual marriage ceremonies, without ever acknowledging the context. We are reclaiming it as a Scripture for ourselves, and we use it especially in commitment ceremonies for lesbians.

The second Scripture passage had equal impact on us. John Paul himself read from Matthew 12:46-50, which

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

concerns itself with Jesus' relation to his biological family. His mother and brothers come to see him, obviously concerned about the direction of his ministry. Jesus redefines his family, saying that it is comprised of those who "do the will of my Heavenly Parent." The Holy Father used this passage to talk about the need to "defend" the traditional, biological family. He spoke eloquently but predictably. However, the Scriptures themselves critiqued his message: clearly Jesus was in conflict with his family of origin, a conflict that was not resolved until he was hanging on a cross. I felt my spirit wearied and insulted by the implication that, as a lesbian, I am antifamily, or that I don't have or am not part of a family. Never mind that I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt and a niece; a spouse in a committed relationship for ten years; a godmother; and a pastor to a local congregation (and to a worldwide MCC family). My family does not fit neatly into Pope John Paul's narrow definition.

Who are your brothers and sisters, John Paul? According to Jesus, our brothers and sisters are all who do God's will, a point the pope seems to know except when it comes to my people. John Paul, you have many lesbian sisters and gay brothers who are striving to follow Jesus—to live lives of justice, mercy and love. That was what Jesus said to us—and that we should not be surprised when our families include the unlikely ones, the poor, the socially outcast and those labeled "sinners."

GAY PEOPLE know the stresses of modern family life though we are no more the cause of them or the product of them than are any other Christians. Our children experience all the pressures of modern American adolescence. Our relationships suffer the same pressures as heterosexual marriages, and we need the same church support.

As the pope blessed perhaps 100 or so children that day, I prayed especially for the 10 per cent of them who will grow up to be gay or lesbian. How will they look back on that amazing historic day? I want them to know that we were there too, blessing them in our hearts, praying for them, and for the heterosexual children as well, that they might grow up in a world that is safer, kinder; where, in Peter Maurin's words, "it is easier for people to be good." Will they be able to count on you, Holy Father, or on your successor, when they grow up? Will their only choice be either to hide in closets of fear or to leave the Catholic Church?

For us, John Paul's message that day mostly missed the mark—except when he spoke so movingly about the cross of Christ. At times, his message was a cross for us to bear; but we, too, believe in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. And we know that in time even the Roman Catholic Church will repent of the sins it visits on our people, and that the church will embrace its gay and lesbian sons and daughters.

October 7, 1987

Nancy L. Wilson.
The Christian CENTURY

DON'T BE SHY! JOIN US...

MCC + MOBILE

1600 Center Street

Sundays at 7:00 P.M.

ANNIVERSARY

MCC AT MOBILE TO CELEBRATE THIRD ANNIVERSARY

MCC at Mobile isn't the new kid on the block any more. We have been in Mobile for three years now and have grown to 43 members in that time.

On Saturday, March 12th, MCC at Mobile will celebrate with our annual Anniversary Banquet and Awards ceremony. The location for the dinner is not yet set, call 476-9142 for that location.

Following the dinner, awards will be presented to the Member of the Year, to the person who has performed outstanding service for others (the Deacon's Award), and certificates of appreciation will be presented to church members who have contributed time and effort to the growth of the church.

Additionally, community members will be honored with certificates for community service. Among the honorees is Jim Ferrels of the National AIDS Network for his efforts in obtaining an AIDS education grant for Mobile, and a one thousand dollar grant for the Buddy Program.

The dinner is open to anyone who wishes to attend, the charge being \$10.00.

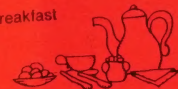
The speaker for the evening will be Rev. Jimmy Brock, pastor of Joy Metropolitan Community Church in Orlando, Florida. Rev. Brock used to be a Southern Baptist pastor in Mobile and Pensacola and is now with MCC. He is a very entertaining and dynamic speaker. You will enjoy him.



Potluck dinner

The first Friday of every month, MCC gets together for a potluck supper and a movie. The movie this month will be "Women in Love," and the supper is served at 7:00 p.m. You will enjoy the fun and the fellowship. A \$3.00 charge is made, proceeds going to the support of the church.

Breakfast



On Joe Cain Day, Sunday, February 14th, MCC will open the building at 10:30 for people to join us for a substantial breakfast before the Joe Cain Day festivities. Charge for the breakfast is \$2.00. Come and enjoy and have fun with us before you go out for the day.

...from the pastor

In getting this newsletter together, some interesting thoughts began to go through my head -- I was thinking of Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras and remembering sweet and funny things that had happened to me over the years at both of these verge of Spring holidays. Then I got to thinking about how many people had never experienced Mardi Gras, and I began remembering the many, many times I had stood on street corners with my hands in the air, yelling "Hey, mister, throw me something!" which is the cry in New Orleans, and last year beginning to understand why signs all over Mobile suddenly say "Moon Pie," and the excitement as Missy (my daughter) and I caught Moon Pies and laughed and tucked them in our pockets and counted them later on the dining room table and were filled with a sense of joy and goodness and beneficence.

Mardi Gras is humanity being silly and feeling extravagant throwing candy and Moon Pies (in Mobile) or toys and necklaces (in New Orleans) and having a wonderful sense that foolishness and generosity are good for people from time to time.

We in the Christian world live in a cycle that recreates each year the wonder of the life of Christ -- Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost -- each season calling us to special meditations on the Christian life. Advent is a time of preparation and expectation of the coming of the Christ child, Christmas celebrates his birth, Epiphany (which means "God with us") announces the presence of God in our world in the form of the Christ. Lent prepares us for his death, burial and resurrection at Easter. Mardi Gras was once an important part of that cycle. "Fat Tuesday" was in medieval times the day on which one used up greases and fats which had been collected (usually in England in the form of pancake breakfasts) so that no meats or meat fats would be in the house during Lent. It was also usually the last time that candies and sweets would be eaten from Lent to Easter, and, of course, this is why sweets are thrown in the parades (and why Easter candy was so important). "Shrove Tuesday" derives from the word to shrive, to confess and be given absolution -- and it was on this day that penitents went to confession and prepared themselves to enter Lent with pure hearts. All of these ideas point to a much simpler time, when people's faith was a part of their daily living pattern, carried out in what they ate as well as in what they believed.

I'm sometimes surprised when Fundamentalist Christians talk about the "pagan" holiday of Mardi Gras and want to do away with it (but, of course, they would do away with Lent as well). Somehow, I think they have got it backwards. I'd like to see Lent be so special and maybe so solemn a time that people would indeed understand that being God's fools was part of the prelude to the solemnity. The contrast was what was important, and Carnival season (from 12th Night or Little Christmas, or King's Day, however January 7th was known around the Christian world to Mardi Gras) was a time of jollity between the solemnity and quiet joy of Christmas to the even deeper solemnity of Lent.

We, in the Gay community, with our understanding of masks and costumes have adopted the two holidays which allow dressing up and masking, Halloween and Mardi Gras, as special times. They have become almost national holidays in our community, and we know each other behind the masks and understand, in some deep place, an even deeper reason for them. We, who have had to "wear the mask" now do so in fun and frivolity. At other times of the year, we do it with far more seriousness. God sees behind the mask and knows the pure in heart. Dear ones, Mardi Gras is our season; live, love, laugh and be happy. "Hey, mister, throw me something," and since this is Mobile, I hope it's a devil's food Moon Pie!

STEVEN JAMES' TOTALLY SUBJECTIVE, NON-SCIENTIFIC GUIDE TO ILLNESS AND HEALTH: TEN STEP PROGRAMS by Steven James

MCC AT MOBILE
AIDS BUDDY PROGRAM
1987
FINANCIAL REPORT

I. HOW TO GET SICK

1. Don't pay attention to your body. Eat plenty of junk food, drink too much, take drugs, have lots of unsafe sex with lots of different partners--and, above all, feel guilty about it. If you are over-stressed and tired, ignore it and keep pushing yourself.
2. Cultivate the experience of your life as meaningless and of little value.
3. Do the things you don't like, and avoid doing what you really want. Follow everyone else's opinion and advice, while seeing yourself as miserable and "stuck."
4. Be resentful and hyper-critical, especially towards yourself.
5. Fill your mind with dreadful pictures, and then obsess over them. Worry most, if not all, of the time.
6. Avoid deep, lasting, intimate relationships.
7. Blame other people for all your problems.
8. Do not express your feelings and views openly and honestly. Other people wouldn't appreciate it. If at all possible, do not even know what your feelings are.
9. Shun anything that resembles a sense of humor. Life is no laughing matter!
10. Avoid making any changes which would bring you greater satisfaction and joy.

II. HOW TO GET SICKER (IF YOU'RE ALREADY SICK)

1. Think about all the awful things that could happen to you. Dwell upon negative, fearful images.
2. Be depressed, self-pitying, envious, and angry. Blame everyone and everything for your illness.
3. Read articles, books, and newspapers, watch TV programs, and listen to people who reinforce the viewpoint that there is NO HOPE. You are powerless to influence your fate.
4. Cut yourself off from other people. Regard yourself as a pariah. Lock yourself up in your room and contemplate death.
5. Hate yourself for having destroyed your life. Blame yourself mercilessly and incessantly.
6. Go to see lots of different doctors. Run from one to another, spend half your time in waiting rooms, get lots of conflicting opinions and lots of experimental drugs, starting one program after another without sticking to any.
7. Quit your job, stop work on any projects, give up all activities that bring you a sense of purpose and fun. See your life as essentially pointless, and at an end.
8. Complain about your symptoms, and if you associate with anyone, do so exclusively with other people who are unhappy and embittered. Reinforce each other's feelings of hopelessness.
9. Don't take care of yourself. What's the use? Try to get other people to do it for you, and then resent them for not doing a good job.
10. Think how awful life is, and how you might as well be dead. But make sure you are absolutely terrified of death, just to increase the pain.

INCOME

Grants	\$1000.00
Fundraisers	2039.27
Contributions	715.00
Total	\$3754.27

DISBURSEMENTS

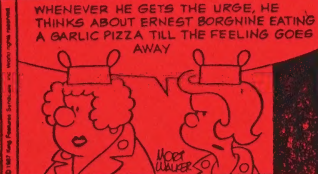
Prescriptions	437.48
Med. Supplies	20.00
Prof. Nurses	860.00
Home Care	60.00
Rent (PWAs)	800.00
Utilities (PWA)	194.76
Phone (PWA)	285.33
Insurance Pmt.	102.66
Burial Cost	257.25
Floral	44.67
Turkeys-T'giving	40.00
Membership- N'tl AIDS Network	100.00
Printing	45.46
	\$3247.61

← FROM PWA NEWSLETTER,
N.Y. N.Y.

BEEBLE BAILEY



9-4



WHENEVER HE GETS THE URGE, HE THINKS ABOUT ERNEST BORGHINE EATING A GARLIC PIZZA TILL THE FEELING GOES AWAY

GMHC PUBLISHES TREATMENT ISSUES

New York City's Gay Men's Health Crisis has begun to publish a free monthly newsletter, called Treatment Issues, designed to explore experimental and alternative therapies for AIDS. Articles will be written in easy-to-understand language, and footnotes will list pertinent studies and references for further reading. Dr. Barry Ginnell of GMHC is the editor. If you wish to receive Treatment Issues free of charge, write: GMHC, Department of Medical Information, Box 274, 132 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011.



BUDDY TRAINING is held every 3rd Monday of the month. If you would like to be a Buddy or attend a Buddy Training Program, please call us at 476-9142 and we will plan a time for you to attend and find out more about what the Buddies do for people with AIDS. Care for the Caretaker is a program to help provide emotional support for the buddies who are caring for people with AIDS.

III. HOW TO STAY WELL (OR GET BETTER, IF YOU'RE NOT SO WELL TO BEGIN WITH)

1. Do things that bring you a sense of fulfillment, joy, and purpose, that validate your worth. See your life as your own creation, and strive to make it a positive one.
2. Pay close and loving attention to yourself, tuning in to your needs on all levels. Take care of yourself, nourishing, supporting, and encouraging yourself.
3. Release all negative emotions—resentment, envy, fear, sadness, anger. Express your feelings appropriately; don't hold onto them. Forgive yourself.
4. Hold positive images and goals in your mind, pictures of what you truly want in your life. When fearful images arise, re-focus on images that evoke feelings of peace and joy.
5. Love yourself, and love everyone else. Make loving the purpose and primary expression in your life.
6. Create fun, loving, honest relationships, allowing for the expression and fulfillment of needs for intimacy and security. Try to heal any wounds in past relationships, as with old lovers, and mother and father.
7. Make a positive contribution to your community, through some form of work or service that you value and enjoy.
8. Make a commitment to health and well-being, and develop a belief in the possibility of total health. Develop your own healing program, drawing on the support and advice of experts without becoming enslaved to them.
9. Accept yourself and everything in your life as an opportunity for growth and learning. Be grateful. When you fuck up, forgive yourself, learn what you can from the experience, and then move on.
10. Keep a sense of humor.

LATEX CONDOMS SAFER

Dr. Marcus Conant, a San Francisco researcher, has stated that the type of condom used can make a difference in protecting a person from HIV infection. Laboratory studies show that HIV will not pass through a latex condom, while natural membrane or skin condoms are riskier because of the pores in the condoms that allow the virus to pass through.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration stresses that even with a latex condom, they must be used properly and must not be torn in order to be effective. The FDA recently tested over 54,000 latex condoms, representing a large variety of brands, and found that 20% failed to meet FDA standards.

However, Conant stresses that latex is a much surer safeguard than any other kind of condom.

GAY COMMUNITY HELP LINE & AIDS HOT LINE

476-9142

"Call Us...We Can Help"

BUDDY BUILDING TO BE DROP-IN CENTER FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH AIDS

Beginning Saturday, February 20th the Buddy Building at 1600 Center Street will be open every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for people living with AIDS to drop in for conversation, a nourishing lunch, and relaxation. There is no charge, and people are invited to come by and make themselves comfortable. You will be asked no questions, the Buddies will be there to serve lunch and clean up, and if you need advice, etc., people will be around to talk to. People with AIDS are invited to talk with each other, network, and compare notes, if that's what they want to do. It's your day -- we're providing the space for you to use it as you choose. TV, games, cards, etc. will be available.

Ken Jones died of AIDS January 13, 1988. He was MCC at Mobile's first deacon and a constant strength and support to the leadership of this church. He was also our first lay delegate to our District. On a trip to District Conference Ken coined the acronym GLAD for the Gulf-Lower Atlantic District, which used to be SAD, the South Atlantic District. Ken felt that no Christian should be SAD, and additionally wanted to remind the Fellowship that we had churches on the Gulf and could and did provoke controversy, but he always made us think, and often made us think about our faith. He will be missed. A memorial service for him is planned for February 19th at 7:00 p.m.

In Memoriam

CDC YEAR-END REPORT

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported 49,743 AIDS cases in states and US territories, as of Dec. 29, 1987. This figure reflects the newly expanded CDC definition of AIDS; 2700 patients were added as a result of the revised definition.

Of the 49,743 diagnosed AIDS patients in the U.S., 25% are Black, 14% are Hispanic, and 1% are Asian, Native American or of unknown racial group. Gay and bisexual men account for 65% of all AIDS cases, 17% are IV drug abusers and 8% are both Gay and IV drug abusers. Hemophilia account for 1%, transfusion cases represent 2% of all cases, and 4%, or 1,964 cases are a result of heterosexual transmission. Patients for whom risk information is incomplete, as well as men who only had heterosexual contact with a prostitute account for 3% of all cases.

The top five states in prevalence of AIDS cases are (in order) New York (13,171), California (10,954), Florida (3,623), Texas (3,465), and New Jersey (3,143). The metropolitan areas reporting the largest number of AIDS cases include New York City (11,961), San Francisco (4,333), Los Angeles (4,072), Houston (1,654) and Washington, DC (1,541).

TEST TUBE EXPERIMENT HAILED AS BREAKTHROUGH

In test tube experiments, CDs, a synthesized protein, has been shown to inhibit the ability of the AIDS virus to bind with healthy immune system cells. Scientists from four major research institutions have independently confirmed these results. The findings, published in the British science journal *NATURE*, were researched by Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Biogen Research Corp., both of Boston, Smith Kline & French Corp. of Pennsylvania, and the Basel Institute of Immunology in Switzerland.

It is hoped that the protein can be used in creating a drug that would prevent the HIV virus from damaging infected people's immune systems.



COMMUNITY DIRECTORY

CHURCHES



BARS



ORGANIZATIONS



RESOURCES



METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH AT MOBILE 1600 Center Street (at Lambert Avenue) Sunday Services: 7:00 P.M. AIDS Body Training: Third Mondays, 7:30 P.M. Bible Study: Tuesdays, 7:30 P.M. (call for location) Rap Discussion Group: Wednesdays, 7:30 P.M. (call for location)	476-9142
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH 6345 Old Shell Road (west Mobile) Sunday Services: 10:45 A.M.	342-6034
TROOPERS 219 Conti Street	436-9139
SOCIETY LOUNGE 51 South Conception Street	433-0184
CORRAL 54 South Conception Street	433-9258
GOLDEN ROO 219 Conti Street	432-9175
CLUB PARK AVENUE 1 South Leahm Street	433-9103
METROPOLITAN WRITERS GUILD	342-7891
SUNDAY AFTERNOON SKETCH GROUP	342-7891
THE ALABAMA FORUM (Monthly Periodical) P. O. Box 55913, Birmingham, Alabama 35255	
MCC * MOBILE NEWSLETTER (Monthly Periodical)	476-9142
MOBILE AIDS FUND P. O. Box 1491, Mobile, Alabama 36601	433-5292
AIDS RUSHY PROGRAM Operated by the Metropolitan Community Church of Mobile	476-9142
NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE 1517 B Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009	(202) 352-6403
AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR AIDS RESEARCH 40 West 57th Street, #405, New York, N.Y. 10019	(212) 353-3118
AIDS CHRISTSLIVE Staffed 2:00 - 8:00 P.M. Eastern Time, Monday-Friday	(800) 221-7044
PARENTS OF GAYS 415 North Alconia, Pensacola, Florida 32597	(904) 433-0528

February

14 JOE GAIN Deacon's 2-eak fast at 1600 Center St. 10:30 a.m. \$2.	15	16	17 ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE 7:30 p.m.	18 Mobile AIDS Support Svces. at Unit. Univer. Fellowship 7:30	19 Memorial Service For Ken Jones 7:00	20 Drop-In Center <i>PMS</i> 10:30-4:00 Free Lunch Every Sat.
21 WORSHIP EVERY SUNDAY 1600 Center St 7:00 p.m.	22 Buddy Training 7:30 Overcoming our Losses	23 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY 7:30 Sin: Love Spurned	24 RAP What do I think about my body? 7:30	25 DEACON TRAINING 7:30 Embracing the Exile	26	27 RED CROSS Home Nursing 9:00 to 4:00 Part II
28 WORSHIP 7:00p.m.	29 CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER	1 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY God's Initia- tive March	2 RAP Nonverbal at Communication What am I saying with my body!	3 N.A.S.S. at Unit.Univers. 7:30	4	5 MOVIE NIGHT AND FOTLUCK 7:00
6 WORSHIP 7:00 p.m.	7	8 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY 7:30 Responsibilit ty	9 RAP Flirting -- Using my body to entice.	10 DEACON TRAINING	11 Church Leadership Social with Jimmy Brock	12 ANNIVERSARY DINNER 7:00
13 ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL WOR- S HIP SERVICE	14	15 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY Sexual Sin <i>SA...</i>	16 RAP Keeping my body healthy.	17	18	19 DROP IN CENTER <i>PMS</i> 10:30-4:00 Free Lunch



METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH AT MOBILE

1600 Center Street, Mobile, Alabama 36604

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

Pastor

(205) 476-9142

NEWSLETTER

Valentine's Day

Love and Valentine's Day reminds me that same-sex love has been around for a long time. Walt Whitman wrote some beautiful poetry describing his feelings for another man. A favorite is this:

WHEN I HEARD AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had been received with plaudits
in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for me that follow'd,
And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were accomplish'd, still I was not
happy,
But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health, refresh'd,
singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disappear in the morning
light,
When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing bathed, laughing with the
cool waters, and saw the sun rise,
And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on his way coming, O then I
was happy,
O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food nourish'd me more,
and the beautiful day pass'd well,
And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at evening came my friend,
And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll slowly continually up
the shores,
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed to me whispering
to congratulate me,
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover in the cool
night,
In the stillness of the autumn moonbeams his face was inclined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast -- and that night I was happy.

FROM THE EDITOR--

If you have received this newsletter in a bar, or have received it through the mail but have not attended MCC * Mobile lately, I want to encourage you to join us! Like the ad elsewhere in this issue says, "Don't Be Shy!" We have in our midst people of all ages and from all walks of life. We have homemakers... we have businessmen... we have teachers... we have professors... we have carpenters... we have students... we have musicians... we have retailers... we have the unemployed, too, and we try to help them. We have men, women, boys, girls, people who drive 30, 50, even 100 miles every Sunday night to be with us. We have a unique program called the AIDS Buddy Program... volunteers within the church community give of their time and energy to assist AIDS patients in need. We have a weekly bible study, covering a wide range of topics. We have a weekly discussion group called "Rap," which provides everyone in the community an opportunity to meet in a non-threatening environment to do just that --- rap. We have our own facility for worship service and other church events. We have our own facility with which we assist AIDS patients and others in need. So, you might say that we have it all. **WRONG!** We don't have **YOU**. If you have always been curious about what an MCC is, or if your own church will not in principle accept you for what you are, or if you just haven't "felt religious" in a few weeks, months or even years, then give MCC * Mobile a try. MCC is people caring about people --- we do not condemn, we do not condone, we DO try to understand.

Obviously this piece is being directed at those who do not normally or regularly join us in our church activities. Some in the non-gay community would readily jump on this as "recruiting." Some would say that I am trying to make our attendance figures look more impressive. Some would probably say that I am just filling up empty space in the newsletter. No, none of these are true. One year ago, I had reached a very low point in my life, spiritually speaking. My own church had long ago told me, in so many words, that I was unfit to belong, did not adhere to beliefs, was in effect not a whole person simply because I happen to be Gay. Upon moving to Mobile, I learned of the MCC and eventually met its pastor, Rev. Marge Ragona. I had of course heard of MCC but had never lived in a city which had one. I began to attend services, became a member in February, and shortly thereafter I was approached to handle the monthly newsletter. Through MCC * Mobile I have met many, many, many people --- people I most likely would never have met in the bars, on the street, or anywhere else. My life has been thoroughly enriched by knowing and dealing with many of these people.

But the point of all this is that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, just like me, who are out there in that vague, shadowy, sometimes confusing expense of land we call Mobile --- people who are in need of what MCC * Mobile has to offer --- people who need the support of others --- people who deep down inside know that they want to "belong" to something --- and even people who are just downright curious. On some of my very infrequent ventures into downtown, I occasionally hear from people who express at least a passing interest in what goes on at MCC * Mobile. But very often, these people never do quite make it when Sunday night rolls around. What happened? Won't you join us... give us a try... see what we are all about. Who knows, you may be very pleasantly surprised!

* * * * *

This is the official organ of the Metropolitan Community Church at Mobile, Alabama, 1600 Center Street, Mobile AL 36606. The newsletter is published monthly to inform church members and the community-at-large about events of MCC * Mobile. We welcome your contributions! All we require is that a name and address be submitted along with the newscopy for publication. We will not print anyone's name or address, however, without explicit written consent. Please contribute your news, views, recent happenings, recipes, book and movie reviews, or place a free classified ad with us (no personals, please.) Send your submissions by the 20th of each month to: 1600 Center Street, Mobile, AL 36604

A COVENANT OF LOVE

Here it is February and Valentine's Day is just around the corner. Love is in the air and lovers are thinking about spring and relationships, and being in love is once more fashionable. So -- by the way -- is commitment. MCC honors commitment, and believes that people grow by making and keeping commitments. Someone once said that anyone can love 20 people in a year, the trick is to love one person for 20 years! If you have a committed relationship that has lasted over time, maybe you'd like to think about celebrating that relationship with a commitment or covenant ceremony. MCC performs a rite called a "Holy Union" which does just that -- celebrates commitment. We require first that the two people acknowledge that the relationship is intended to be a long-term commitment (and we even think of these as "life partnerships") and that they will be sharing their lives in a very personal covenant, which transcends any other relationship. Secondly, we ask that the relationship be in existence for at least a year, or that they have spent six months living together, and know that the relationship can withstand the everyday tensions of life under one roof. Third, we ask that you be willing to undergo some probing into how your relationship works, so that the person who performs the ceremony can do so with a sense of integrity, knowing that the relationship is indeed a solid one.

If this interests you, please call Rev. Marge at 476-9142 and talk about what a Holy Union might mean in your life and how it might make your relationship better for both of you. Celebrating life and love is a wonderful way to announce to your friends (and maybe even your family) that your love is here to stay.

FOR ALL TIME, LOVE

If I have all human or angelic eloquence, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, enough to move mountains, but am without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to be burned, but am without love, it will do me no good whatsoever.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous. Love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish. Love does not take offense, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth. It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

Love does not come to an end. But if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or if one has the gift of tongues, it will not continue forever. If one has all knowledge, this too must fail. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will disappear. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, thought like a child, argued like a child; but now I am grown, and all childish ways are put behind me. Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now the knowledge that I have is imperfect, but then I shall know as fully as I am known.

In short, there are three things that abide: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13

And in the Bible, one woman said to another:

Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to keep from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so and more beside, if ought save death part me and thee.

Ruth 1:14-17

A Gay Witness to Pope John Paul II

TO ITS SURPRISE, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches received an invitation to participate in the ecumenical prayer service led by Pope John Paul II at Williams-Brice Stadium in Columbia, South Carolina, during his recent visit to the U.S. The invitation, issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, offered us the chance to participate in the clergy procession as well as the subsequent "Day of Dialogue" with Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, president of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity; Bishop James Crumley of the Lutheran Church in America; and other ecumenical leaders.

The surprise was due to the fact that our denomination has a special ministry to gays and lesbians. We are well aware of the Vatican's negative stance on homosexuality, and that Dignity International (the organization for gay and lesbian Catholics) had not invited to any papal events. It seemed strange to us that our first contact ever with the bishops would be this invitation. Indeed, the invitation may have been a mistake—though one organizer of the prayer service at Columbia told us it was not. In any case, our presence was never mentioned publicly, or acknowledged in any of the literature concerning the event. Perhaps MCC fell into the category of "the other groups" cited in the program.

Many of our gay sisters and brothers, so hurt and angered by the Roman Catholic Church, would probably not understand why we accepted the invitation. But we felt it was important to make a witness.

The "Day of Dialogue" offered us little chance for dialogue, however. Presentations by Willebrands and Crumley left time for only three questions from the audience. (Since many of the invited guests represented denominations that had been engaged in bilateral discussions with the Roman Catholic Church, it occurred to us that we were included in the group because of MCC's formal discussion with the National Council of Churches.) I did get the chance to introduce myself informally to Cardinal Willebrands, though it was unclear whether he grasped the nature of our denomination. There was no time to continue the conversation.

Before the prayer service we crossed into a waiting room for about four hours with other Catholics and Protestants, national leaders and local pastors. During that time we renewed old acquaintances and made new friends—and experienced the full range of responses to our lapel buttons that stated "God is Greater than AIDS."

Troy D. Perry, the founder of the MCC, and I carried with us in that clergy procession the hopes and fears, rage and pain of millions of gay and lesbian Catholics—those who are now members of MCC; those who are not in any church; and those who are trying to remain faithful Roman Catholics. We also represented those who are living and dying with AIDS, knowing that it is largely homophobic hysteria that has tragically impeded adequate research, treatment, education, justice and compassion. And we carried with us the blessed assurance that perseverance, time and the Holy Spirit are on our side. As people come to know us, homophobic fear is healed.

There were some special ironies in the service of the word at Columbia. The first reading, delivered by Helen Hayes, was from Ruth 1:14-17. For us in MCC, and for gays and lesbians everywhere, that Scripture is a poignant story of the deep commitment of one woman to another. We have always smiled inwardly when the church uses it so glibly and uncritically for heterosexual marriage ceremonies, without ever acknowledging the context. We are reclaiming it as a Scripture for ourselves, and we use it especially in commitment ceremonies for lesbians.

The second Scripture passage had equal impact on us. John Paul himself read from Matthew 12:46-50, which

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

concerns itself with Jesus' relation to his biological family. His mother and brothers come to see him, obviously concerned about the direction of his ministry. Jesus redefines his family, saying that it is comprised of those who "do the will of my Heavenly Parent." The Holy Father used this passage to talk about the need to "defend" the traditional, biological family. He spoke eloquently but predictably. However, the Scriptures themselves critiqued his message: clearly Jesus was in conflict with his family of origin, a conflict that was not resolved until he was hanging on a cross. I felt my spirit wearied and insulted by the implication that, as a lesbian, I am anti-family, or that I don't have or am not part of a family. Never mind that I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt and a niece; a spouse in a committed relationship for ten years; a godmother; and a pastor to a local congregation (and to a worldwide MCC family). My family does not fit neatly into Pope John Paul's narrow definition.

Who are your brothers and sisters, John Paul? According to Jesus, our brothers and sisters are all who do God's will, a point the pope seems to know except when it comes to my people. John Paul, you have many lesbian sisters and gay brothers who are striving to follow "one" to five lives of justice, mercy and love. That was what Jesus said to us—and that we should not be surprised when our families include the unlikely ones, the poor, the socially outcast and those labeled "sinners."

GAY PEOPLE know the stresses of modern family life though we are no more the cause of them or the product of them than are any other Christians. Our children experience all the pressures of modern American adolescence. Our relationships suffer the same pressures as heterosexual marriages, and we need the same church support.

As the pope blessed perhaps 100 or so children that day, I prayed especially for the 10 per cent of them who will grow up to be gay or lesbian. How will they look back on that amazing historic day? I want them to know that we were there too, blessing them in our hearts, praying for them, and for the heterosexual children as well, that they might grow up in a world that is safer, kinder, where, in Peter Maurin's words, "it is easier for people to be good." Will they be able to count on you, Holy Father, or on your successor, when they grow up? Will their only choice be either to hide in closets of fear or to leave the Catholic Church?

For us, John Paul's message that day mostly missed the mark—except when he spoke so movingly about the cross of Christ. At times, his message was a cross for us to bear. Let us, too, believe in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. And we know that in time even the Roman Catholic Church will repent of the sins it visits on our people, and that the church will embrace its gay and lesbian sons and daughters.

October 7, 1987

Nancy L. Wilson.

The Christian CENTURY

DON'T BE SHY! JOIN US...

MCC. + MOBILE

1600 Center Street

Sundays at 7:00 P.M.

ANNIVERSARY

MCC AT MOBILE TO CELEBRATE THIRD ANNIVERSARY

MCC at Mobile isn't the new kid on the block any more. We have been in Mobile for three years now and have grown to 43 members in that time.

On Saturday, March 12th, MCC at Mobile will celebrate with our annual Anniversary Banquet and Awards ceremony. The location for the dinner is not yet set, call 476-9142 for that location.

Following the dinner, awards will be presented to the Member of the Year, to the person who has performed outstanding service for others (the Deacon's Award), and certificates of appreciation will be presented to church members who have contributed time and effort to the growth of the church.

Additionally, community members will be honored with certificates for community service. Among the honorees is Jim Ferels of the National AIDS Network for his efforts in obtaining an AIDS education grant for Mobile, and a one thousand dollar grant for the Buddy Program.

The dinner is open to anyone who wishes to attend, the charge being \$10.00.

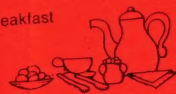
The speaker for the evening will be Rev. Jimmy Brock, pastor of Joy Metropolitan Community Church in Orlando, Florida. Rev. Brock used to be a Southern Baptist pastor in Mobile and Pensacola and is now with MCC. He is a very entertaining and dynamic speaker. You will enjoy him.



Potluck dinner

The first Friday of every month, MCC gets together for a potluck supper and a movie. The movie this month will be "Women in Love," and the supper is served at 7:00 p.m. You will enjoy the fun and the fellowship. A \$3.00 charge is made, proceeds going to the support of the church.

Breakfast



On Joe Cain Day, Sunday, February 14th, MCC will open the building at 10:30 for people to join us for a substantial breakfast before the Joe Cain Day festivities. Charge for the breakfast is \$2.00. Come and enjoy and have fun with us before you go out for the day.

...from the pastor

In getting this newsletter together, some interesting thoughts began to go through my head -- I was thinking of Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras and remembering sweet and funny things that had happened to me over the years at both of these verge of Spring holidays. Then I got to thinking about how many people had never experienced Mardi Gras, and I began remembering the many, many times I had stood on street corners with my hands in the air, yelling "Hey, mister, throw me something!" which is the cry in New Orleans, and last year beginning to understand why signs all over Mobile suddenly say "Moon Pie," and the excitement as Missy (my daughter) and I caught Moon Pies and laughed and tucked them in our pockets and counted them later on the dining room table and were filled with a sense of joy and goodness and beneficence.

Mardi Gras is humanity being silly and feeling extravagant throwing candy and Moon Pies (in Mobile) or toys and necklaces (in New Orleans) and having a wonderful sense that foolishness and generosity are good for people from time to time.

We in the Christian world live in a cycle that recreates each year the wonder of the life of Christ -- Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost -- each season calling us to special meditations on the Christian life. Advent is a time of preparation and expectation of the coming of the Christ child, Christmas celebrates his birth, Epiphany (which means "God with us") announces the presence of God in our world in the form of the Christ. Lent prepares us for his death, burial and resurrection at Easter. Mardi Gras was once an important part of that cycle. "Fat Tuesday" was in medieval times the day on which one used up greases and fats which had been collected (usually in England in the form of pancake breakfasts) so that no meats or meat fats would be in the house during Lent. It was also usually the last time that candies and sweets would be eaten from Lent to Easter, and, of course, this is why sweets are thrown in the parades (and why Easter candy was so important). "Shrove Tuesday" derives from the word shrive, to confess and be given absolution -- and it was on this day that penitents went to confession and prepared themselves to enter Lent with pure hearts. All of these ideas point to a much simpler time, when people's faith was a part of their daily living pattern, carried out in what they ate as well as in what they believed.

I'm sometimes surprised when Fundamentalist Christians talk about the "pagan" holiday of Mardi Gras and want to do away with it (but, of course, they would do away with Lent as well). Somehow, I think they have got it backwards. I'd like to see Lent be so special and maybe so solemn a time that people would indeed understand that being God's fools was part of the prelude to the solemnity. The contrast was what was important, and Carnival season (from 12th Night or Little Christmas, or King's Day, however January 7th was known around the Christian world to Mardi Gras) was a time of jollity between the solemnity and quiet joy of Christmas to the even deeper solemnity of Lent.

We, in the Gay community, with our understanding of masks and costumes have adopted the two holidays which allow dressing up and masking, Halloween and Mardi Gras, as special times. They have become almost national holidays in our community, and we know each other behind the masks and understand, in some deep place, an even deeper reason for them. We, who have had to "wear the mask" now do so in fun and frivolity. At other times of the year, we do it with far more seriousness. God sees behind the mask and knows the pure in heart. Dear ones, Mardi Gras is, our season; live, love, laugh and be happy. "Hey, mister, throw me something," and since this is Mobile, I hope it's a devil's food Moon Pie!

STEVEN JAMES' TOTALLY SUBJECTIVE, NON-SCIENTIFIC GUIDE TO ILLNESS AND HEALTH: TEN STEP PROGRAMS by Steven James

MCC AT MOBILE
AIDS BUDDY PROGRAM
1987
FINANCIAL REPORT

I. HOW TO GET SICK

1. Don't pay attention to your body. Eat plenty of junk food, drink too much, take drugs, have lots of unsafe sex with lots of different partners--and, above all, feel guilty about it. If you are over-stressed and tired, ignore it and keep pushing yourself.
2. Cultivate the experience of your life as meaningless and of little value.
3. Do the things you don't like, and avoid doing what you really want. Follow everyone else's opinion and advice, while seeing yourself as miserable and "stuck."
4. Be resentful and hyper-critical, especially towards yourself.
5. Fill your mind with dreadful pictures, and then obsess over them. Worry most, if not all, of the time.
6. Avoid deep, lasting, intimate relationships.
7. Blame other people for all your problems.
8. Do not express your feelings and views openly and honestly. Other people wouldn't appreciate it. If at all possible, do not even know what your feelings are.
9. Shun anything that resembles a sense of humor. Life is no laughing matter!
10. Avoid making any changes which would bring you greater satisfaction and joy.

II. HOW TO GET SICKER (IF YOU'RE ALREADY SICK)

1. Think about all the awful things that could happen to you. Dwell upon negative, fearful images.
2. Be depressed, self-pitying, envious, and angry. Blame everyone and everything for your illness.
3. Read articles, books, and newspapers, watch TV programs, and listen to people who reinforce the viewpoint that there is NO HOPE. You are powerless to influence your fate.
4. Cut yourself off from other people. Regard yourself as a pariah. Lock yourself up in your room and contemplate death.
5. Hate yourself for having destroyed your life. Blame yourself mercilessly and incessantly.
6. Go to see lots of different doctors. Run from one to another, spend half your time in waiting rooms, get lots of conflicting opinions and lots of experimental drugs, starting one program after another without sticking to any.
7. Quit your job, stop work on any projects, give up all activities that bring you a sense of purpose and fun. See your life as essentially pointless, and at an end.
8. Complain about your symptoms, and if you associate with anyone, do so exclusively with other people who are unhappy and embittered. Reinforce each other's feelings of hopelessness.
9. Don't take care of yourself. What's the use? Try to get other people to do it for you, and then resent them for not doing a good job.
10. Think how awful life is, and how you might as well be dead. But make sure you are absolutely terrified of death, just to increase the pain.

INCOME

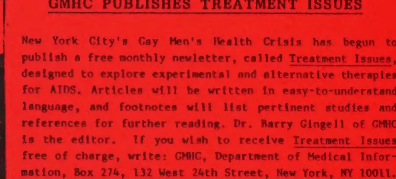
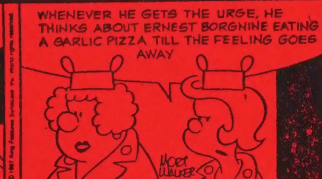
Grants	\$1000.00
Fundraisers	2039.27
Contributions	715.00
Total	\$3754.27

DISBURSEMENTS

Prescriptions	437.48
Med. Supplies	20.00
Prof. Nurses	860.00
Home Care	60.00
Rent (PWAs)	800.00
Utilities (PWA)	194.76
Phone (PWA)	285.33
Insurance Pmt.	102.66
Burial Cost	257.25
Floral	44.67
Turkeys-T'giving	40.00
Membership- N'tl	
AIDS Network	100.00
Printing	45.46
	\$3247.61

← FROM PWA NEWSLETTER,
N.Y. N.Y.

BEETLE BAILEY



GMHC PUBLISHES TREATMENT ISSUES

New York City's Gay Men's Health Crisis has begun to publish a free monthly newsletter, called Treatment Issues, designed to explore experimental and alternative therapies for AIDS. Articles will be written in easy-to-understand language, and footnotes will list pertinent studies and references for further reading. Dr. Barry Gingell of GMHC is the editor. If you wish to receive Treatment Issues free of charge, write: GMHC, Department of Medical Information, Box 274, 132 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011.

WE NEED
YOU!

BUDDY TRAINING is held every 3rd Monday of the month. If you would like to be a Buddy or attend a Buddy Training Program, please call us at 476-9142 and we will plan a time for you to attend and find out more about what the Buddies do for people with AIDS. Care for the Caretaker is a program to help provide emotional support for the buddies who are caring for people with AIDS.

III. HOW CAN I STAY WELL (OR GET BETTER, IF YOU'RE NOT SO WELL TO BEGIN WITH)

1. Do things that bring you a sense of fulfillment, joy, and purpose, that validate your worth. See your life as your own creation, and strive to make it a positive one.
2. Pay close and loving attention to yourself, tuning in to your needs on all levels. Take care of yourself, nourishing, supporting, and encouraging yourself.
3. Release all negative emotions—resentment, envy, fear, sadness, anger. Express your feelings appropriately; don't hold onto them. Forgive yourself.
4. Hold positive images and goals in your mind, pictures of what you truly want in your life. When fearful images arise, re-focus on images that evoke feelings of peace and joy.
5. Love yourself, and love everyone else. Make loving the purpose and primary expression in your life.
6. Create fun, loving, honest relationships, allowing for the expression and fulfillment of needs for intimacy and security. Try to heal any wounds in past relationships, as with old lovers, and mother and father.
7. Make a positive contribution to your community, through some form of work or service that you value and enjoy.
8. Make a commitment to health and well-being, and develop a belief in the possibility of total health. Develop your own healing program, drawing on the support and advice of experts without becoming enslaved to them.
9. Accept yourself and everything in your life as an opportunity for growth and learning. Be grateful. When you fuck up, forgive yourself, learn what you can from the experience, and then move on.
10. Keep a sense of humor.

LATEX CONDOMS SAFER

Dr. Marcus Conant, a San Francisco researcher, has stated that the type of condom used can make a difference in protecting a person from HIV infection. Laboratory studies show that HIV will not pass through a latex condom, while natural membrane or skin condoms are riskier because of the pores in the condoms that allow the virus to pass through.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration stresses that even with a latex condom, they must be used properly and must not be torn in order to be effective. The FDA recently tested over 54,000 latex condoms, representing a large variety of brands, and found that 20% failed to meet FDA standards.

However, Conant stresses that latex is a much surer safeguard than any other kind of condom.

BUDDY BUILDING TO BE DROP-IN CENTER FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH AIDS

Beginning Saturday, February 20th the Buddy Building at 1600 Center Street will be open every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for people living with AIDS to drop in for conversation, a nourishing lunch, and relaxation. There is no charge, and people are invited to come by and make themselves comfortable. You will be asked no questions, the Buddies will be there to serve lunch and clean up, and if you need advice, etc., people will be around to talk to. People with AIDS are invited to talk with each other, network, and compare notes, if that's what they want to do. It's your day -- we're providing the space for you to use it as you choose. TV, games, cards, etc. will be available.

Ken Jones died of AIDS January 13, 1988. He was MCC at Mobile's first deacon and a constant strength and support to the leadership of this church. He was also our first lay delegate to our District. On a trip to District Conference Ken coined the acronym GLAD for the Gulf-Lower Atlantic District, which used to be SAD, the South Atlantic District. Ken felt that no Christian should be SAD, and additionally wanted to remind the Fellowship that we had churches on the Gulf. Ken could and did provoke controversy, but he always made us think, and often made us think about our faith. He will be missed. A memorial service for him is planned for February 19th at 7:00 p.m.

CDC YEAR-END REPORT

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported 49,743 AIDS cases in states and US territories, as of Dec. 28, 1987. This figure reflects the newly expanded CDC definition of AIDS; 2700 patients were added as a result of the revised definition.

Of the 49,743 diagnosed AIDS patients in the U.S., 25% are Black, 14% are Hispanic, and 1% are Asian, Native American or of unknown racial group. Gay and bisexual men account for 65% of all AIDS cases, 17% are IV drug abusers and 8% are both Gay and IV drug abusers. Hemophilia account for 1%, transfusion cases represent 2% of all cases, and 4%, or 1,964 cases are a result of heterosexual transmission. Patients for whom risk information is incomplete, as well as men who only had heterosexual contact with a prostitute account for 3% of all cases.

The top five states in prevalence of AIDS cases are (in order) New York (13,171), California (10,954), Florida (3,673), Texas (3,465), and New Jersey (3,143). The metropolitan areas reporting the largest number of AIDS cases include New York City (11,961), San Francisco (6,533), Los Angeles (4,072), Houston (1,654) and Washington, DC (1,541).

TEST TUBE EXPERIMENT HAILED AS BREAKTHROUGH

In test tube experiments, CD4, a synthesized protein, has been shown to inhibit the ability of the AIDS virus to bind with healthy immune system cells. Scientists from four major research institutions have independently confirmed these results. The findings, published in the British science journal *NATURE*, were researched by Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Biogen Research Corp., both of Boston, Smith Kline & French Corp. of Pennsylvania, and the Basel Institute of Immunology in Switzerland.

It is hoped that the protein can be used in creating a drug that would prevent the HIV virus from damaging infected people's immune systems.



In Memoriam

COMMUNITY DIRECTORY

CHURCHES



BARS



ORGANIZATIONS



RESOURCES



METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH AT MOBILE 1600 Center Street (at Lambert Avenue) Sunday Services: 1:00 P.M. AIDS Buddy Training: Third Mondays, 7:30 P.M. Bible Study: Tuesdays, 7:30 P.M. (call for location) Rep Discussion Group: Wednesdays, 7:30 P.M. (call for location)	476-9142
METROPOLITAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH 6745 Old Shell Road (west Mobile) Sunday Services: 10:15 A.M.	342-6054
THOUGHTS 215 Conti Street	438-9159
SOCIETY LOUNGE 51 South Conception Street	433-8184
CORRAL 54 South Conception Street	433-9258
GOLDEN ROD 219 Conti Street	433-3175
CLUB PARK AVENUE 7 South Joachim Street	433-9103
METROPOLITAN WRITERS GUILD	342-7891
SUNDAY AFTERNOON SKETCH GROUP	342-7891
THE ALABAMA FORUM (Monthly Periodical) P. O. Box 55913, Birmingham, Alabama 35255	
MOB • MOBILE NEWSLETTER (Monthly Periodical)	476-9142
MOBILE AIDS FUND P. O. Box 1431, Mobile, Alabama 36601	433-5144
AIDS BUDY PROGRAM Operated by the Metropolitan Community Church of Mobile	476-9142
NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE 1217 B Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009	(202) 532-6483
AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR AIDS RESEARCH 40 West 57th Street, #406, New York, N.Y. 10019	(212) 333-3118
AIDS CRISISLINE Staffed 2:00 - 8:00 P.M. Eastern Time, Monday-Friday	(800) 221-7044
PARENTS OF GAYS 415 North Alcania, Pensacola, Florida 32507	(904) 433-8528

February

14 JOE CAIR Deacon's Breakfast fast at 1600 Center St. 10:30 a.m. \$2.	15	16	17 ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE 7:30 p.m.	18 Mobile AIDS Support Svcs. at Unit. Univer. Fellowship 7:30	19 Memorial Service For Ken Jones 7:00	20 Drop-In Center 10:30-4:00 Free Lunch Every Sat.
21 WORSHIP EVERY SUNDAY 1600 Center St. 7:00 p.m.	22 Buddy Training 7:30 Overcoming our Losses	23 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY 7:30 Sin: Love Spurned	24 RAP What do I think about my body? 7:30	25 DEACON TRAINING 7:30 Embracing the Exile	26	27 RED CROSS Home Nursing 9:00 to 4:00 Part II
28 WORSHIP 7:00p.m.	29 CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER	1 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY God's Initia- tive March	2 RAP Nonverbal Communication What am I saying with my body?	3 N.A.S.S. at Unit.Univers. 7:30	4	5 MOVIE NIGHT AND POTLUCK 7:00
6 WORSHIP 7:00 p.m.	7	8 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY 7:30 Responsibili- ty	9 RAP Flirting -- Using my body to entice.	10 DEACON TRAINING	11 Church Leadership Social with Jimmy Brock	12 ANNIVERSARY DINNER 7:00
13 ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL WOR- SHIP SERVICE	14	15 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY Sexual Sin OK...	16 RAP Keeping my body healthy.	17	18	19 DROP IN CENTER 10:30-4:00 Free Lunch



METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH AT MOBILE

1600 Center Street, Mobile, Alabama 36604

Rev. MARGE RAGONA
Pastor

(205) 476-9142

NEWSLETTER

Valentine's Day

Love and Valentine's Day reminds me that same-sex love has been around for a long time. Walt Whitman wrote some beautiful poetry describing his feelings for another man. A favorite is this:

WHEN I HEARD AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had been received with plaudits
in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for me that follow'd,
And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were accomplish'd, still I was not
happy,
But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health, refresh'd,
singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disappear in the morning
light,
When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing bathed, laughing with the
cool waters, and saw the sun rise,
And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on his way coming, O then I
was happy,
O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food nourish'd me more,
and the beautiful day pass'd well,
And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at evening came my friend,
And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll slowly continually up
the shores,
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed to me whispering
to congratulate me,
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover in the cool
night,
In the stillness of the autumn moonbeams his face was inclined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast -- and that night I was happy.

FROM THE EDITOR--

If you have received this newsletter in a bar, or have received it through the mail but have not attended MCC * Mobile lately, I want to encourage you to join us! Like the ad elsewhere in this issue says, "Don't Be Shy!" We have in our midst people of all ages and from all walks of life. We have homemakers... we have businessmen... we have teachers... we have professors... we have carpenters... we have students... we have musicians... we have retailers... we have the unemployed, too, and we try to help them. We have men, women, boys, girls, people who drive 30, 50, even 100 miles every Sunday night to be with us. We have a unique program called the AIDS Buddy Program... volunteers within the church community give of their time and energy to assist AIDS patients in need. We have a weekly bible study, covering a wide range of topics. We have a weekly discussion group called "Rap," which provides everyone in the community an opportunity to meet in a non-threatening environment to do just that --- rap. We have our own facility for worship service and other church events. We have our own facility with which we assist AIDS patients and others in need. So, you might say that we have it all. ~~WRONG!~~ We don't have YOU. If you have always been curious about what an MCC is, or if your own church will not in principle accept you for what you are, or if you just haven't "felt religious" in a few weeks, months or even years, then give MCC * Mobile a try. MCC is people caring about people --- we do not condemn, we do not condone, we DO try to understand.

Obviously this piece is being directed at those who do not normally or regularly join us in our church activities. Some in the non-gay community would readily jump on this as "recruiting." Some would say that I am trying to make our attendance figures look more impressive. Some would probably say that I am just filling up empty space in the newsletter. No, none of these are true. One year ago, I had reached a very low point in my life, spiritually speaking. My own church had long ago told me, in so many words, that I was unfit to belong, did not adhere to beliefs, was in effect not a whole person simply because I happen to be Gay. Upon moving to Mobile, I learned of the MCC and eventually met its pastor, Rev. Marge Ragons. I had of course heard of MCC but had never lived in a city which had one. I began to attend services, became a member in February, and shortly thereafter I was approached to handle the monthly newsletter. Through MCC * Mobile I have met many, many, many people --- people I most likely would never have met in the bars, on the street, or anywhere else. My life has been thoroughly enriched by knowing and dealing with many of these people.

But the point of all this is that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, just like me, who are out there in that vague, shadowy, sometimes confusing expanse of land we call Mobile --- people who are in need of what MCC * Mobile has to offer --- people who need the support of others --- people who deep down inside know that they want to "belong" to something --- and even people who are just downright curious. On some of my very infrequent ventures into downtown, I occasionally hear from people who express at least a passing interest in what goes on at MCC * Mobile. But very often, these people never do quite make it when Sunday night rolls around. What happened? Won't you join us... give us a try... see what we are all about. Who knows, you may be very pleasantly surprised!

* * * * *

This is the official organ of the Metropolitan Community Church at Mobile, Alabama, 1600 Center Street, Mobile AL 36606. The newsletter is published monthly to inform church members and the community-at-large about events of MCC * Mobile. We welcome your contributions! All we require is that a name and address be submitted along with the news copy for publication. We will not print anyone's name or address, however, without explicit written consent. Please contribute your news, views, recent happenings, recipes, book and movie reviews, or place a free classified ad with us (no personals, please.) Send your submissions by the 20th of each month to: 1600 Center Street, Mobile, AL 36604

A COVENANT OF LOVE

Here it is February and Valentine's Day is just around the corner. Love is in the air and lovers are thinking about spring and relationships, and being in love is once more fashionable. So -- by the way -- is commitment. MCC honors commitment, and believes that people grow by making and keeping commitments. Someone once said that anyone can love 20 people in a year, the trick is to love one person for 20 years! If you have a committed relationship that has lasted over time, maybe you'd like to think about celebrating that relationship with a commitment or covenant ceremony. MCC performs a rite called a "Holy Union" which does just that -- celebrates commitment. We require first that the two people acknowledge that the relationship is intended to be a long-term commitment (and we even think of these as "life partnerships") and that they will be sharing their lives in a very personal covenant, which transcends any other relationship. Secondly, we ask that the relationship be in existence for at least a year, or that they have spent six months living together, and know that the relationship can withstand the everyday tensions of life under one roof. Third, we ask that you be willing to undergo some probing into how your relationship works, so that the person who performs the ceremony can do so with a sense of integrity, knowing that the relationship is indeed a solid one.

If this interests you, please call Rev. Marge at 476-9142 and talk about what a Holy Union might mean in your life and how it might make your relationship better for both of you. Celebrating life and love is a wonderful way to announce to your friends (and maybe even your family) that your love is here to stay.

FOR ALL TIME, LOVE

If I have all human or angelic eloquence, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, enough to move mountains, but am without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to be burned, but am without love, it will do me no good whatsoever.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous. Love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish. Love does not take offense, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth. It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

Love does not come to an end. But if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or if one has the gift of tongues, it will not continue forever. If one has all knowledge, this too must fail. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will disappear. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, thought like a child, argued like a child; but now I am grown, and all childish ways are put behind me. Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now the knowledge that I have is imperfect, but then I shall know as fully as I am known.

In short, there are three things that abide: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.

I Corinthians 13

And in the Bible, one woman said to another:

Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to keep from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so and more beside, if ought save death part me and thee.

Ruth 1:14-17

A Gay Witness to Pope John Paul II

The second Scripture passage had equal impact on us.
John Paul himself read from Matthew 12:46-50, which

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

TO ITS SURPRISE, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches received an invitation to participate in the ecumenical prayer service led by Pope John Paul II at Williams-Brice Stadium in Columbia, South Carolina, during his recent visit to the U.S. The invitation, issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, offered us the chance to participate in the clergy procession as well as the subsequent "Day of Dialogue" with Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, president of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity; Bishop James Crumley of the Lutheran Church in America; and other ecumenical leaders.

The surprise is due to the fact that our denomination has a special ministry to gays and lesbians. We are well aware of the Vatican's negative stance on homosexuality, and that Dignity International (the organization for gay and lesbian Catholics) was not invited to any papal events. It seemed strange to us that our first contact ever with the bishops would be this invitation. Indeed, the invitation may have been a mistake—though one organizer of the prayer service at Columbia told us it was not. In any case, our presence was never mentioned publicly, or acknowledged in any of the literature concerning the event. Perhaps MCC fell into the category of "the other groups" cited in the program.

Many of our gay sisters and brothers, so hurt and angered by the Roman Catholic Church, would probably not understand why we accepted the invitation. But we felt it was important to make a witness.

The "Day of Dialogue" offered us little chance for dialogue, however. Presentations by Willebrands and Crumley left time for only three questions from the audience. (Since many of the invited guests represented denominations that had been engaged in bilateral discussions with the Roman Catholic Church, it occurred to us that we were included in the group because of MCC's formal discussion with the National Council of Churches.) I did get the chance to introduce myself informally to Cardinal Willebrands, though it was unclear whether he grasped the nature of our denomination. There was no time to continue the conversation.

Before the prayer service we crowded into a waiting room for about four hours with Catholics and Protestants, national leaders and local pastors. During that time we renewed old acquaintances and made new friends—and experienced the full range of responses to our lapel buttons that stated "God is Greater than AIDS."

Troy D. Perry, the founder of the MCC, and I carried with us in that clergy procession the hopes and fears, rage and pain of millions of gay and lesbian Catholics—those who are now members of MCC; those who are not in any church; and those who are trying to remain faithful Roman Catholics. We also represented those who are living and dying with AIDS, knowing that it is largely homophobic hysteria that has tragically impeded adequate research, treatment, education, justice and compassion. And we carried with us the blessed assurance that perseverance, time and the Holy Spirit are on our side. As people come to know us, homophobic fear is healed.

There were some special ironies in the service of the word at Columbia. The first reading, delivered by Helen Hayes, was from Ruth 1:14-17. For us in MCC, and for gays and lesbians everywhere, that Scripture is a poignant story of the deep commitment of one woman to another. We have always smiled inwardly when the church uses it so glibly and uncritically for heterosexual marriage ceremonies, without ever acknowledging the context. We are reclaiming it as a Scripture for ourselves, and we use it especially in commitment ceremonies for lesbians.

concerns itself with Jesus' relation to his biological family. His mother and brothers come to see him, obviously concerned about the direction of his ministry. Jesus redefines his family, saying that it is comprised of those who "do the will of my Heavenly Parent." The Holy Father used this passage to talk about the need to "defend" the traditional, biological family. He spoke eloquently but predictably. However, the Scriptures themselves critiqued his message: clearly Jesus was in conflict with his family of origin, a conflict that was not resolved until he was hanging on a cross. I felt my spirit wearied and insulted by the implication that, as a lesbian, I am antifamily, or that I don't have or am not part of a family. Never mind that I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt and a niece; a spouse in a committed relationship for ten years; a godmother; and a pastor to a local congregation (and to a worldwide MCC family). My family does not fit neatly into Pope John Paul's narrow definition.

Who are your brothers and sisters, John Paul? According to Jesus, our brothers and sisters are all who do God's will, a point the pope seems to know except when it comes to my people. John Paul, you have many lesbian sisters and gay brothers who are striving to follow Jesus to live lives of justice, mercy and love. That was what Jesus said to us—and that we should not be surprised when our families include the unlikely ones, the poor, the socially outcast and those labeled "sinners."

GAY PEOPLE know the stresses of modern family life though we are no more the cause of them or the product of them than are any other Christians. Our children experience all the pressures of modern American adolescence. Our relationships suffer the same pressures as heterosexual marriages, and we need the same church support.

As the pope blessed perhaps 100 or so children that day, I prayed especially for the 10 per cent of them who will grow up to be gay or lesbian. How will they look back on that amazing historic day? I want them to know that we were there too, blessing them in our hearts, praying for them, and for the heterosexual children as well, that they might grow up in a world that is safer, kinder; where, in Peter Maurin's words, "it is easier for people to be good." Will they be able to count on you, Holy Father, or on your successor, when they grow up? Will their only choice be either to hide in closets of fear or to leave the Catholic Church?

For us, John Paul's message that day mostly missed the mark—except when he spoke so movingly about the cross of Christ. At times, his message was a cross for us to bear; but we, too, believe in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. And we know that in time even the Roman Catholic Church will repent of the sins it visits on our people, and that the church will embrace its gay and lesbian sons and daughters.

October 7, 1987

Nancy L. Wilson.

The Christian CENTURY

DON'T BE SHY! JOIN US...

MCC + MOBILE

1600 Center Street

Sundays at 7:00 P.M.

ANNIVERSARY

MCC AT MOBILE TO CELEBRATE THIRD ANNIVERSARY

MCC at Mobile isn't the new kid on the block any more. We have been in Mobile for three years now and have grown to 43 members in that time.

On Saturday, March 12th, MCC at Mobile will celebrate with our annual Anniversary Banquet and Awards ceremony. The location for the dinner is not yet set, call 476-9142 for that location.

Following the dinner, awards will be presented to the Member of the Year, to the person who has performed outstanding service for others (the Deacon's Award), and certificates of appreciation will be presented to church members who have contributed time and effort to the growth of the church.

Additionally, community members will be honored with certificates for community service. Among the honorees is Jim Ferels of the National AIDS Network for his efforts in obtaining an AIDS education grant for Mobile, and a one thousand dollar grant for the Buddy Program.

The dinner is open to anyone who wishes to attend, the charge being \$10.00.

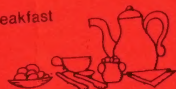
The speaker for the evening will be Rev. Jimmy Brock, pastor of Joy Metropolitan Community Church in Orlando, Florida. Rev. Brock used to be a Southern Baptist pastor in Mobile and Pensacola and is now with MCC. He is a very entertaining and dynamic speaker. You will enjoy him.



Potluck dinner

The first Friday of every month, MCC gets together for a potluck supper and a movie. The movie this month will be "Women in Love," and the supper is served at 7:00 p.m. You will enjoy the fun and the fellowship. A \$3.00 charge is made, proceeds going to the support of the church.

Breakfast



On Joe Cain Day, Sunday, February 14th, MCC will open the building at 10:30 for people to join us for a substantial breakfast before the Joe Cain Day festivities. Charge for the breakfast is \$2.00. Come and enjoy and have fun with us before you go out for the day.

...from the pastor

In getting this newsletter together, some interesting thoughts began to go through my head -- I was thinking of Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras and remembering sweet and funny things that had happened to me over the years at both of these verge of Spring holidays. Then I got to thinking about how many people had never experienced Mardi Gras, and I began remembering the many, many times I had stood on street corners with my hands in the air, yelling "Hey, mister, throw me something!" which is the cry in New Orleans, and last year beginning to understand why signs all over Mobile suddenly say "Moon Pie," and the excitement as Missy (my daughter) and I caught Moon Pies and laughed and tucked them in our pockets and counted them later on the dining room table and were filled with a sense of joy and goodness and beneficence.

Mardi Gras is humanity being silly and feeling extravagant throwing candy and Moon Pies (in Mobile) or toys and necklaces (in New Orleans) and having a wonderful sense that foolishness and generosity are good for people from time to time.

We in the Christian world live in a cycle that recreates each year the wonder of the life of Christ -- Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost -- each season calling us to special meditations on the Christian life. Advent is a time of preparation and expectation of the coming of the Christ child, Christmas celebrates his birth, Epiphany (which means "God with us") announces the presence of God in our world in the form of the Christ. Lent prepares us for his death, burial and resurrection at Easter. Mardi Gras was once an important part of that cycle. "Fat Tuesday" was in medieval times the day on which one used up greases and fats which had been collected (usually in England in the form of pancake breakfasts) so that no meats or meat fats would be in the house during Lent. It was also usually the last time that candies and sweets would be eaten from Lent to Easter, and, of course, this is why sweets are thrown in the parades (and why Easter candy was so important). "Shrove Tuesday" derives from the word to shrive, to confess and be given absolution -- and it was on this day that penitents went to confession and prepared themselves to enter Lent with pure hearts. All of these ideas point to a much simpler time, when people's faith was a part of their daily living pattern, carried out in what they ate as well as in what they believed.

I'm sometimes surprised when Fundamentalist Christians talk about the "pagan" holiday of Mardi Gras and want to do away with it (but, of course, they would do away with Lent as well). Somehow, I think they have got it backwards. I'd like to see Lent be so special and maybe so solemn a time that people would indeed understand that being God's fools was part of the prelude to the solemnity. The contrast was what was important, and Carnival season (from 12th Night or Little Christmas, or King's Day, however January 7th was known around the Christian world to Mardi Gras) was a time of jollity between the solemnity and quiet joy of Christmas to the even deeper solemnity of Lent.

We, in the Gay community, with our understanding of masks and costumes have adopted the two holidays which allow dressing up and masking, Hallowe'en and Mardi Gras, as special times. They have become almost national holidays in our community, and we know each other behind the masks and understand, in some deep place, an even deeper reason for them. We, who have had to "wear the mask" now do so in fun and frivolity. At other times of the year, we do it with far more seriousness. God sees behind the mask and knows the pure in heart. Dear ones, Mardi Gras is our season; live, love, laugh and be happy. "Hey, mister, throw me something," and since this is Mobile, I hope it's a devil's food Moon Pie!

STEVEN JAMES' TOTALLY SUBJECTIVE, NON-SCIENTIFIC GUIDE TO ILLNESS AND HEALTH: TEN STEP PROGRAMS by Steven James

MCC AT MOBILE
AIDS BUDDY PROGRAM
1987
FINANCIAL REPORT

I. HOW TO GET SICK

1. Don't pay attention to your body. Eat plenty of junk food, drink too much, take drugs, have lots of unsafe sex with lots of different partners--and, above all, feel guilty about it. If you are over-stressed and tired, ignore it and keep pushing yourself.
2. Cultivate the experience of your life as meaningless and of little value.
3. Do the things you don't like, and avoid doing what you really want. Follow everyone else's opinion and advice, while seeing yourself as miserable and "stuck."
4. Be resentful and hyper-critical, especially towards yourself.
5. Fill your mind with dreadful pictures, and then obsess over them. Worry most, if not all, of the time.
6. Avoid deep, lasting, intimate relationships.
7. Blame other people for all your problems.
8. Do not express your feelings and views openly and honestly. Other people wouldn't appreciate it. If at all possible, do not even know what your feelings are.
9. Shun anything that resembles a sense of humor. Life is no laughing matter!
10. Avoid making any changes which would bring you greater satisfaction and joy.

II. HOW TO GET SICKER (IF YOU'RE ALREADY SICK)

1. Think about all the awful things that could happen to you. Dwell upon negative, fearful images.
2. Be depressed, self-pitying, envious, and angry. Blame everyone and everything for your illness.
3. Read articles, books, and newspapers, watch TV programs, and listen to people who reinforce the viewpoint that there is NO HOPE. You are powerless to influence your fate.
4. Cut yourself off from other people. Regard yourself as a pariah. Lock yourself up in your room and contemplate death.
5. Hate yourself for having destroyed your life. Blame yourself mercilessly and incessantly.
6. Go to see lots of different doctors. Run from one to another, spend half your time in waiting rooms, get lots of conflicting opinions and lots of experimental drugs, starting one program after another without sticking to any.
7. Quit your job, stop work on any projects, give up all activities that bring you a sense of purpose and fun. See your life as essentially pointless, and at an end.
8. Complain about your symptoms, and if you associate with anyone, do so exclusively with other people who are unhappy and embittered. Reinforce each other's feelings of hopelessness.
9. Don't take care of yourself. What's the use? Try to get other people to do it for you, and then resent them for not doing a good job.
10. Think how awful life is, and how you might as well be dead. But make sure you are absolutely terrified of death, just to increase the pain.

INCOME

Grants	\$1000.00
Fundraisers	2039.27
Contributions	715.00
Total	<u>\$3754.27</u>

DISBURSEMENTS

Prescriptions	437.48
Med. Supplies	20.00
Prof. Nurses	860.00
Home Care	60.00
Rent (PWAs)	800.00
Utilities (PWA)	194.76
Phone (PWA)	285.33
Insurance Pmt.	102.66
Burial Cost	257.25
Floral	44.67
Turkeys-T'giving	40.00
Membership- N'tl	
AIDS Network	100.00
Printing	45.46
	<u>\$3247.61</u>

← FROM PWA NEWSLETTER,
N.Y. N.Y.

BEEBLE BAILEY



GMHC PUBLISHES TREATMENT ISSUES

New York City's Gay Men's Health Crisis has begun to publish a free monthly newsletter, called Treatment Issues, designed to explore experimental and alternative therapies for AIDS. Articles will be written in easy-to-understand language, and footnotes will list pertinent studies and references for further reading. Dr. Barry Cinnell of GMHC is the editor. If you wish to receive Treatment Issues free of charge, write: GMHC, Department of Medical Information, Box 274, 132 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011.

WE NEED
YOU!

BUDDY TRAINING is held every 3rd Monday of the month. If you would like to be a Buddy or attend a Buddy Training Program, please call us at 476-9142 and we will plan a time for you to attend and find out more about what the Buddies do for people with AIDS. Care for the Caretaker is a program to help provide emotional support for the buddies who are caring for people with AIDS.

III. HOW TO STAY WELL

(OR GET BETTER, IF YOU'RE NOT SO WELL TO BEGIN WITH)

1. Do things that bring you a sense of fulfillment, joy, and purpose, that validate your worth. See your life as your own creation, and strive to make it a positive one.
2. Pay close and loving attention to yourself, tuning in to your needs on all levels. Take care of yourself, nourishing, supporting, and encouraging yourself.
3. Release all negative emotions—resentment, envy, fear, sadness, anger. Express your feelings appropriately, don't hold onto them. Forgive yourself.
4. Hold positive images and goals in your mind, pictures of what you truly want in your life. When fearful images arise, re-focus on images that evoke feelings of peace and joy.
5. Love yourself, and love everyone else. Make loving the purpose and primary expression in your life.
6. Create fun, loving, honest relationships, allowing for the expression and fulfillment of needs for intimacy and security. Try to heal any wounds in past relationships, as with old lovers, and mother and father.
7. Make a positive contribution to your community, through some form of work or service that you value and enjoy.
8. Make a commitment to health and well-being, and develop a belief in the possibility of total health. Develop your own healing program, drawing on the support and advice of experts without becoming enslaved to them.
9. Accept yourself and everything in your life as an opportunity for growth and learning. Be grateful. When you fuck up, forgive yourself, learn what you can from the experience, and then move on.
10. Keep a sense of humor.

LATEX CONDOMS SAFER

Dr. Marcus Conant, a San Francisco researcher, has stated that the type of condom used can make a difference in protecting a person from HIV infection. Laboratory studies show that HIV will not pass through a latex condom, while natural membrane or skin condoms are riskier because of the pores in the condoms that allow the virus to pass through.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration stresses that even with a latex condom, they must be used properly and must not be torn in order to be effective. The FDA recently tested over 54,000 latex condoms, representing a large variety of brands, and found that 20% failed to meet FDA standards.

However, Conant stresses that latex is a much surer safeguard than any other kind of condom.

GAY COMMUNITY HELP LINE & AIDS HOT LINE

476-9142

"Call Us...We Can Help"

BUDDY BUILDING TO BE DROP-IN CENTER FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH AIDS

Beginning Saturday, February 20th the Buddy Building at 1600 Center Street will be open every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for people living with AIDS to drop in for conversation, a nourishing lunch, and relaxation. There is no charge, and people are invited to come by and make themselves comfortable. You will be asked no questions, the Buddies will be there to serve lunch and clean up, and if you need advice, etc., people will be around to talk to. People with AIDS are invited to talk with each other, network, and compare notes, if that's what they want to do. It's your day — we're providing the space for you to use it as you choose. TV, games, cards, etc. will be available.

CDC YEAR-END REPORT

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported 49,743 AIDS cases in states and US territories, as of Dec. 28, 1987. This figure reflects the newly expanded CDC definition of AIDS; 2700 patients were added as a result of the revised definition.

Of the 49,743 diagnosed AIDS patients in the U.S., 25% are Black, 14% are Hispanic, and 1% are Asian, Native American or of unknown racial group. Gay and bisexual men account for 65% of all AIDS cases, 17% are IV drug abusers and 8% are both gay and IV drug abusers. Hemophilia accounts for 1%, transfusion cases represent 2% of all cases, and 4%, or 1,966 cases are a result of heterosexual transmission. Patients for whom risk information is incomplete, as well as men who only had heterosexual contact with a prostitute account for 3% of all cases.

The top five states in prevalence of AIDS cases are (in order) New York (13,171), California (10,954), Florida (3,623), Texas (3,465), and New Jersey (3,143). The metropolitan areas reporting the largest number of AIDS cases include New York City (11,961), San Francisco (4,433), Los Angeles (4,072), Houston (1,654) and Washington, DC (1,541).

TEST TUBE EXPERIMENT HAILED AS BREAKTHROUGH

In test tube experiments, CD4, a synthesized protein, has been shown to inhibit the ability of the AIDS virus to bind with healthy immune system cells. Scientists from four major research institutions have independently confirmed these results. The findings, published in the British science journal *NATURE*, were researched by Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Biogen Research Corp., both of Boston, Smith Kline & French Corp. of Pennsylvania, and the Basel Institute of Immunology in Switzerland.

It is hoped that the protein can be used in creating a drug that would prevent the HIV virus from damaging infected people's immune systems.



Ken Jones died of AIDS January 13, 1988. He was MCC at Mobile's first deacon and a constant strength and support to the leadership of this church. He was also our first lay delegate to our District. On a trip to District Conference Ken coined the acronym GLAD for the Gulf-Lower Atlantic District, which used to be SAD, the South Atlantic District. Ken felt that no Christian should be SAD, and additionally wanted to remind the Fellowship that we had churches on the Gulf Ken could and did provoke controversy, but he always made us think, and often made us think about our faith. He will be missed. A memorial service for him is planned for February 19th at 7:00 p.m.

In Memoriam

COMMUNITY DIRECTORY

CHURCHES



BARS



METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH AT MOBILE 1600 Center Street (at Leubert Avenue) Sunday Services: 7:00 P.M. AIDS Buddy Training: Third Mondays, 7:30 P.M. Bible Study: Tuesdays, 7:30 P.M. (call for location) Ray Discussion Group: Wednesdays, 7:30 P.M. (call for location)	476-9142
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH 6345 Old Shell Road (West Mobile) Sunday Services: 10:45 A.M.	342-6834
TROOPERS 215 Conti Street	438-9159
SOCIETY LOUNGE 51 South Conception Street	435-8184
CORAL 94 South Conception Street	435-9258
GOLDEN ROD 219 Conti Street	435-9175
CLUB FARE AVENUE 7 South Joachim Street	433-9103

ORGANIZATIONS



METROPOLITAN WRITERS GUILD	342-7891
SUNDAY AFTERNOON SKITEN GROUP	342-7891
THE ALABAMA FORUM (Monthly Periodical) P. O. Box 55913, Birmingham, Alabama 35255	
MCC & MOBILE NEWSLETTER (Monthly Periodical)	476-9142

RESOURCES



MOBILE AIDS FUND P. O. Box 1491, Mobile, Alabama 36601	433-5214
AIDS BUDY PROGRAM Operated by the Metropolitan Community Church of Mobile	476-9142
NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE 1517 S Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009	(202) 352-6485
AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR AIDS RESEARCH 40 West 57th Street, #406, New York, N.Y. 10019	(212) 533-3118
AIDS CRISISLINE Staffed 2:00 - 8:00 P.M. Eastern Time, Monday-Friday	(800) 221-7044
PARENTS OF GAYS 415 North Alconic, Pensacola, Florida 32527	(904) 433-8528

February

14 10E CAIN Deacon's Breakfast at 1600 Center St. 10:30 a.m. \$2.	15	16	17 ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE 7:30 p.m.	18 Mobile AIDS Support Svcs. at Unit. Univer. Fellowship 7:30	19 Memorial Service For Ken Jones 7:00	20 Drop-In Center 10:30-4:00 Free Lunch Every Sat.
21 WORSHIP EVERY SUNDAY 1600 Center St 7:00 p.m.	22 Buddy Training 7:30 Overcoming our Losses	23 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY 7:30 Sin: Love Spurned	24 RAP What do I think about my body? 7:30	25 DEACON TRAINING 7:30 Embracing the Exile	26	27 RED CROSS Home Nursing 9:00 to 4:00 Part II
28 WORSHIP 7:00p.m.	29 CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER	1 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY God's Initia- tive March	2 RAP Nonverbal Communication What am I saying with my body?	3 M.A.S.S. Unit.Univers. 7:30	4	5 MOVIE NIGHT AND POTLUCK 7:00
6 WORSHIP 7:00 p.m.	7	8 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY 7:30 Responsibili- ty	9 RAP Flirting -- Using my body to entice.	10 DEACON TRAINING	11 Church Leadership Social with Jimmy Brock	12 ANNIVERSARY DINNER 7:00
13 ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL WOR- SHIP SERVICE	14	15 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY Sexual Sin OK...	16 RAP Keeping my body healthy.	17	18	19 DROP IN CENTER 10:30-4:00 Free Lunch